



May 8, 2012

From: Garrett Fesler, OHA/Alexandria Archaeology
Re: Update on Stage 2 Archaeological Survey of Fort Ward Park

As of May 7, 2012, the Alexandria Archaeology field crew has completed archaeological survey of approximately 23 acres, which equates to approximately three-fourths of the park project area (Map 1). Thus far, the five-person crew has excavated approximately 975 shovel test holes, with approximately half of them yielding artifacts. It is anticipated that 125 to 150 more shovel test holes will be excavated in order to complete the Stage 2 archaeological survey. This should be in about two weeks.

Roughly 2,500 artifacts have been recovered from the ~475 positive shovel test holes. We are finding that artifacts pertaining to recent use of the park are frequently found in the first several inches of soil. Soft drink bottle glass, aluminum pull tabs, toys, picnicking debris, and even a badly decayed rubber clown nose (see Figure 1), a vestige of a past birthday party or a public event at the park. While these “park-related” artifacts will be mapped and counted, they will be little help in the historical analysis of the park's previous residents and activities. However, they may be helpful in mapping the places used by the public, or at least where trash is discarded. This information may be useful in planning park management areas as well.

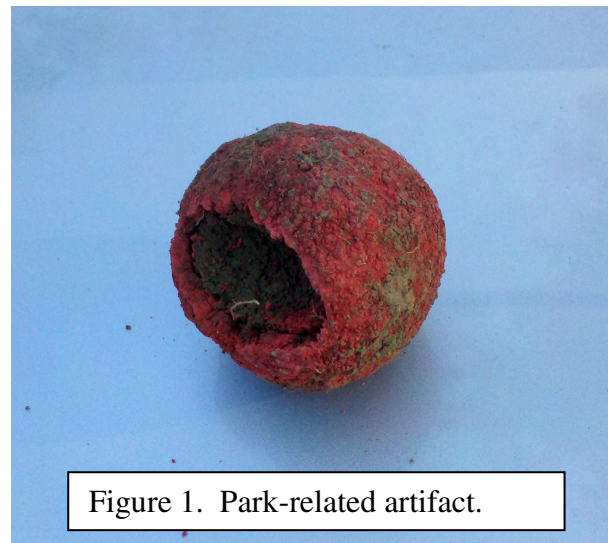
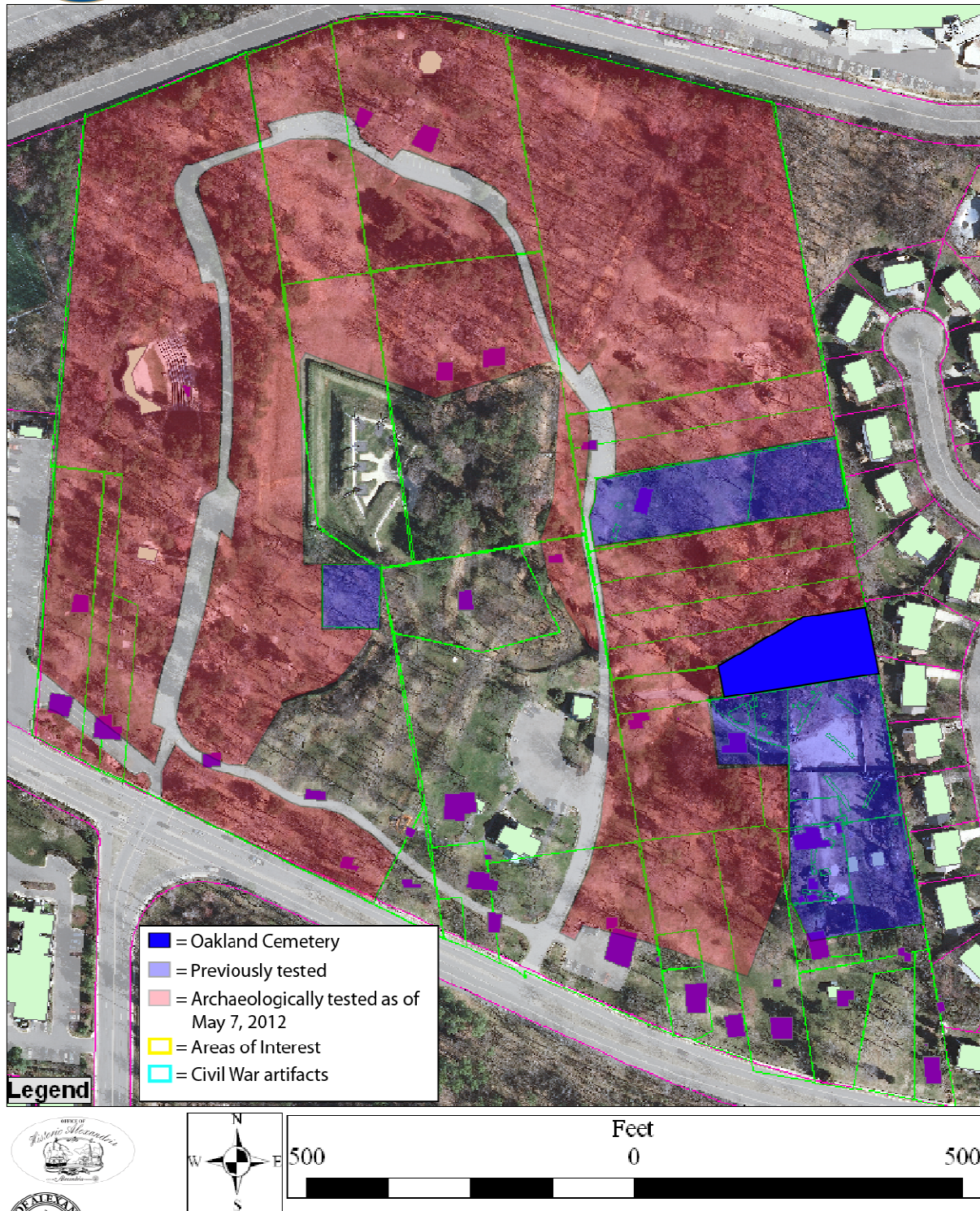
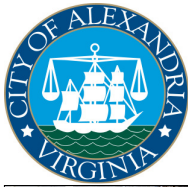


Figure 1. Park-related artifact.

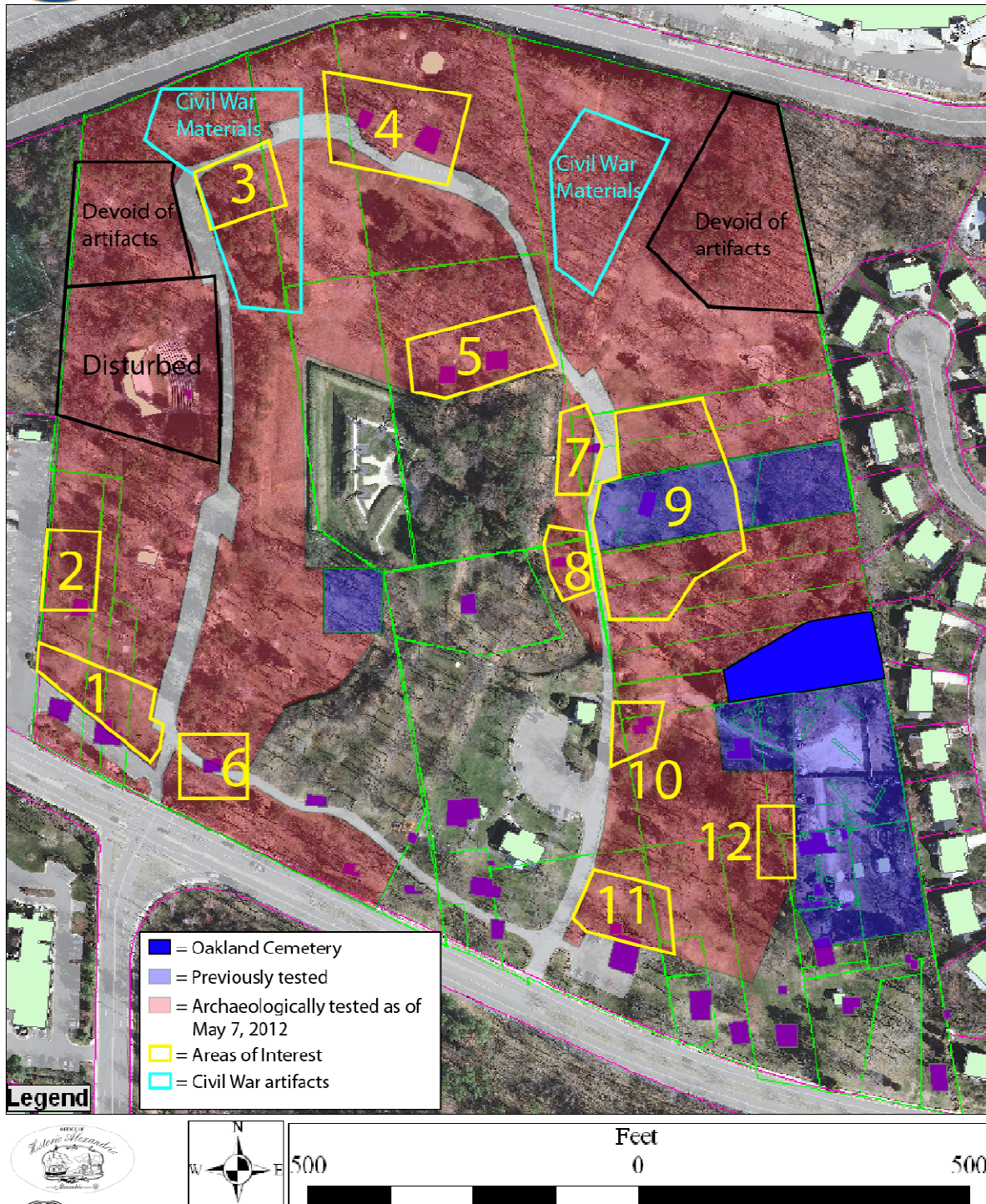
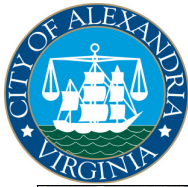
Since the last update on April 24, archaeologists have identified six new concentrations of artifacts, shown on Map 2 as Areas of Interest (Numbers 7-12). Over the past two weeks the field crew has focused on excavating shovel test holes and did not conduct any further metal detecting within the park. Systematic metal detecting will resume next week.

A brief summary of the most recent findings in Area of Interest 7 through 12 is provided below. As lab work is completed, analysis of artifact types and dates will provide additional information regarding the activities and family associations in these Areas of Interest. For information about Areas of Interest 1 through 6 and a summary of metal detecting findings to date, please consult previous progress reports (dated April 4 and 24, 2012) located on the Alexandria Archaeology Museum website:

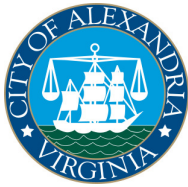
<http://www.alexandriava.gov/historic/archaeology/default.aspx?id=54262#current>



Map 1. The area of Fort Ward Park that has been archaeologically investigated as of May 7, 2012, is depicted in red.



Map 2. Locations of Areas of Interest and concentrations of Civil War-related artifacts at Fort Ward Park as of May 7, 2012.



Area of Interest 7:

Compared to some of the other areas of interest, this one is not as robust as most of the others. A slightly elevated amount of container glass and other early twentieth-century artifacts is located in Area of Interest 7 (see Map 2). The artifacts relate to an outbuilding that appears in this location on a 1927 aerial photograph. The park loop road appears to have impacted a portion of this area. Additional testing will be necessary to flesh out a better understanding of this site area.

Area of Interest 8:

A concentration of container glass, nails, and a small amount of ceramics is located in Area of Interest 8 (see Map 2). The archaeological materials are concentrated in the vicinity of where a building once stood, as depicted on a 1937 aerial map. Additional testing would be needed to determine whether the building once served as a household or as some sort of outbuilding.

Area of Interest 9:

Area of Interest 9 includes the Shorts/Stuart/Randall home lot. This 1-acre tract, part of the original 10-acre parcel bought by the Shorts family, was tested during Stage 1 work in 2010-11. This Stage 2 testing process has revealed that the archaeological artifacts expand outside the lot to the north and to the south (see Map 2). Additional archaeological testing is recommended to the north and to the south of the formal lot in order to fully assess the entire site.

Area of Interest 10:

A heavy concentration of twentieth-century artifacts is located in Area of Interest 10. According to a 1937 aerial photograph, a sizeable house was present at this location. Amanda Clark, daughter of Harriet Shorts, inherited this property from her mother and sold it to Wallace and Cynthia Smith ca. 1930. Later, Alfred and Sarah Collins purchased the property from the Smiths, and the artifacts recovered probably relate to the Smith and/or Collins households. The landform is sandwiched



Figure 2. Demolition debris, probably from the Smith and/or Collins households

between the park loop road on the west and a tributary drainage on the east. One shovel test hole in this area generated a hefty amount of debris—bathroom tile, building materials—that appears to be related to the demolition of the main house (see Figure 2 below). Additional archaeological testing in this area may provide additional information about this household.



Area of Interest 11:

The artifacts (container glass, ceramics, nails, and other household debris) recovered from Area of Interest 11 are directly related to the Samuel Ashby household (see Map 2; see Figure 3). The Ashby family lived on the property in the first half of the twentieth century. The site area likely will expand to the east as more shovel testing takes place. Archaeologists encountered evidence of buried brick or concrete piers in the general location of the north side of the main Ashby house. The majority of the footprint for the house is currently located beneath a gravel parking lot. Additional archaeological testing is recommended for this site, with a particular focus on identifying the exact location of the original Ashby house.

Figure 3. Household debris from the Ashby house site.



Area of Interest 12:

Area of Interest 12 represents the western portion of a multipurpose lot that once served as the Seminary Colored School (ca. 1899-1926), then as St. Cyprians Episcopal Church (ca. 1926-1942), and later renovated for use as a home by John Lorenzo Claiborne (1942-1947), and then sold to Lee Thomas Young (ca. 1947-1960) (see Map 2). During Stage 1 archaeological testing, much of the main building was assessed. However, additional testing in Area of Interest 12 would help to clarify the full extent of the building and the associated artifacts on what is essentially the western side of this site area.

The archaeological crew will now focus on the southeast corner of the park along Braddock Road and the grassy area surrounding the historical museum in order to complete the Stage 2 survey. The field crew schedule is from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. from Monday through Friday. We welcome visitors to drop by any time during a work day to visit with the crew, ask questions, etc. If you have any questions about the project, please contact Garrett Fesler at 703.746.4399 or via email at garrett.fesler@alexandriava.gov